

Forward Focus

Forums on Careers in the Arts for People With Disabilities in Washington State



A Compilation of Input, Results and Next Steps

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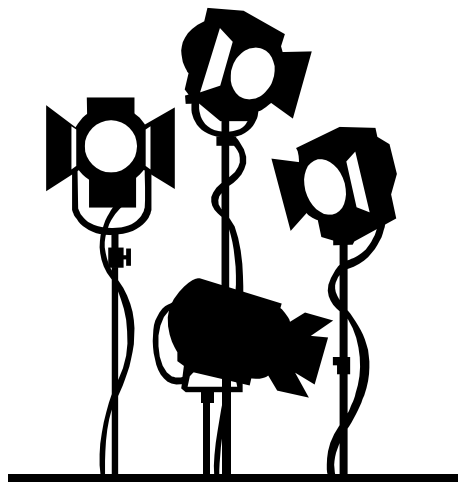
Leland Schooley, Seattle

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Accessibility, Diversity and Nondiscrimination

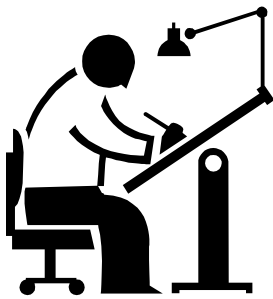
Accessibility is an organizational asset and a civil right. The Washington State Arts Commission (WSAC) complies with all local, state and federal laws and regulations concerning civil and human rights. Our programs, grants and employment practices are free of discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, age, gender or disability. In addition, WSAC is specifically committed to complying with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA requires that all programs, services and activities, when viewed in their entirety, are readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. WSAC strives for effective communication with individuals with speech, visual and hearing disabilities. Materials are available in alternative formats upon request. Including people with disabilities in our definition of diversity is an integral part of the Washington State Arts Commission's strategic plan.



For questions about or “how-to” assistance with issues of accessibility, diversity and non-discrimination please contact: Bitsy Bidwell, Community Arts Development Manager and Sec. 504 Rehabilitation Act Coordinator at (360) 586-2421 or bitsyb@arts.wa.gov



Introduction



In the fall of 2002, a call for grant proposals was sent to all the state arts agencies in the nation. The program was jointly sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, VSA arts (formerly Very Special Arts) and the National Center for Arts and Disability at the University of California Los Angeles. According to the grant guidelines, the grantors wanted states, in conjunction with their state VSA organization, to “convene Statewide Forums on Careers in the Arts for People with Disabilities. The purposes of the Statewide Forums are to (1) assess the education and career needs and barriers for artists and arts administrators with disabilities; and (2) develop and implement strategies to overcome barriers and advance careers in the arts for individuals with disabilities.”

The Washington State Arts Commission joined with VSA arts of Washington to submit an application that would serve the needs of the people of our state. Given the large pool of artists and individuals with disabilities in Washington, and the widespread geographic area, Forums on Careers in the Arts had to serve a range of potential audiences and priorities. We proposed and were granted funding to conduct three one-day forums held September 24-26, 2003 in Seattle, Spokane and Vancouver. The format included a keynote speaker, a choice of two workshops (from several offerings) and an opportunity for input and planning using Open Space Technology. The Open Space question was **“What can we best do to advance careers in the arts for people with disabilities?”** The Open Space format allowed a wide range of topics, ideas and recommendations to be discussed and shared. In addition to these on-site opportunities, the Open Space question and attendant notes were posted on the WSAC website for further conversation and input from those unable to attend the forums in person. Following the Forums all the input and information was compiled and is being distributed in this publication.

The ***Forums on Careers in the Arts for People With Disabilities*** were funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, VSA Arts and the Social Security Administration through the auspices of the National Arts and Disability Center at the University of California Los Angeles. Washington partners for the project were the Washington State Arts Commission, VSA arts of Washington, and disAbility Resources of Southwest Washington.

Planning Committee

Andrea Archer, Project FUN

Jim Baker, disAbility Resource Center of Southwest Washington

Bitsy Bidwell, Washington State Arts Commission

Charlene Curtiss, LightMotion Dance Company

Dan Schmitt, VSA arts of Washington

Open Space Facilitators for the three Forums were:

Rich Henry in Spokane

Jeretta Scott in Seattle

Miriam Barnett in Vancouver

Special thanks goes to **David Roche**, keynoter, who began each day with humor, insight, compassion and energy.

Working artists who presented workshops were:

Frank Sullivan, actor/director

Charlene Curtiss, choreographer

Brom Wikstrom, painter

Paul Van Dyke, pianist



The Forums

Spokane

On September 24, 2003, the first Forum on Careers in the Arts for People With Disabilities was held in the Empire Ballroom of the Ridpath Hotel in Spokane, Washington. About 60 people attended, including a group of ten students and their teachers. The agenda for the day was similar to the one for each location. We began with a keynote address by actor/humorist/activist David Roche, who has a severe facial disfigurement. *“In my speaking and performing, I bring profound encouragement and empowerment to audiences to help them face change and challenges in relationships, on the job, in all phases of their lives. My face thus becomes a gift, not only for myself, but for others, as their hearts open to courage, inspiration and laughter. I am proud to be part of the emerging culture of disability. I believe in the healing power of humor and storytelling.”*

Following the keynote address there were two workshop options: the first with Frank Sullivan, actor and producer of the Express Theater, and the second with Scott Denison from the Social Security Administration. A third scheduled workshop presenter, Dan Maher, was unable to attend.

The space was then “opened” by the Open Space Facilitator, Rich Henry, who introduced Open Space Technology and the question, *“What can we best do to advance careers in the arts for people with disabilities?”* Topics for discussion were presented and scheduled during three subsequent sessions. The discussion at each topic group was recorded on newsprint and later transferred to computer. A full transcript of all commentary is available upon request.

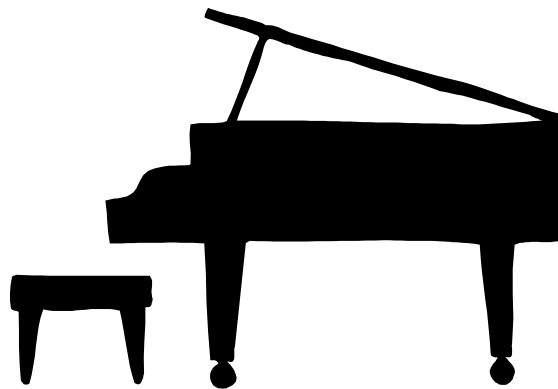
At the conclusion of the day, the space was “closed” and final thoughts regarding the question were presented in the ending circle.

Seattle

On September 25, 2003, the second Forum was held in the conference rooms of the Seattle Center. About fifty-one people were in attendance. David Roche again started the day with a keynote speech and set the tenor and tone for the day. Charlene Curtiss, choreographer, Brom Wikstrom, painter, and the Social Security Administration, presented workshops. The Open Space Facilitator, Jeretta Scott, opened the space and managed the introduction of topics and their scheduling for the three sessions. Again, a wide range of topics and input was forthcoming and was recorded. The space was closed with final thoughts.

Vancouver

September 26, 2003 was the third and final Forum held in the Community Room of the Water Resources Education Center in Vancouver. A total of twenty-two people were involved, although some had to depart early. David Roche delivered the keynote address; workshops were offered by Paul Van Dyke, pianist, and the Social Security Administration.



Who Came?

A wide range of people attended – artists, private and public agency representatives, activists, parents, students, teachers and arts organization representatives. The mix was a little bit different at each site and did influence the discussion and input. The registration reflects the following notable distinctions:

- In Spokane there was a representative of the musicians union and a group of folks from one theater
- In Seattle the participants included a large number of public agency and VSA arts representatives
- In Vancouver, the majority of attendees worked for one private agency

The people who came shaped the feedback at each site. The overall input, however, was extremely broad because of the range of viewpoints of those who participated at all the venues.

What Did They Say?

The discussion has been grouped into the following theme areas. The number of times a session was held on the topic is noted.

- Access/Awareness/Advocacy/Internal “Ableism” – 3 sessions
- Education/Professional development – 4 sessions
- Employment Opportunities – 4 sessions
- Funding/Resources/Community resources – 5 sessions
- Inclusion/Integration/Participation – 5 sessions
- Information/Marketing – 4 sessions
- Infrastructure/Transportation/Adaptive technology – 5 sessions
- Networking/Collaborations/Partnerships – 3 sessions
- Specific Disabilities – 2 sessions
- Specific Disciplines – 5 sessions
- Specific Individuals – 2 sessions
- Specific Organizations – 4 sessions
- Art Therapy – 2 sessions (Art Therapy was mentioned in various sessions. People came who were involved and interested in art therapy, so there were discussion groups, although these conversations were not particularly focused on *careers* in the arts.)

Summaries of Input and Recommendations

Access, Advocacy, Awareness and Internalized “Ableism”

Summary: Discussions were about remaining physical, social and emotional barriers between people with disabilities and careers in the arts, the need to raise awareness regarding these barriers, the need to advocate for changes, and the necessity of fighting the negative societal messages that have become internalized in some people with disabilities. This internalized “Ableism” can keep people with disabilities from seeing themselves as effective, creative citizens who have something to contribute to their communities.

What is needed:

- Specific access accommodations - e.g. transportation for musicians with disabilities at festivals, help with load-in, load-out and setup of equipment for musicians with disabilities to make it possible for them to perform, accessible stages and backstage areas for performing artists with disabilities, a process for judging blind musicians that takes into account their inability to sight-read.
- More opportunities to increase the awareness of the public about disability issues in general and about the needs of specific groups including exhibits and performances featuring the work of artists with disabilities.
- Artists with disabilities need to get politically active. Training needs to be provided by appropriate agencies/organizations for artists with disabilities on how to lobby local and state officials.
- More artists with disabilities need to communicate their experiences through their work.
- Greater representation of artists with disabilities on boards of agencies and organizations.
- Training needs to be provided by appropriate agencies/organizations for artists with disabilities on how to be a board/commission member.
- Participation in October Disability Awareness programs by artists with disabilities.
- Incentives for employers to hire artists with disabilities.

Education and Professional Development

Summary: Education and Professional Development shares a lot of territory with almost every other discussion theme. Education for the public regarding disability issues, awareness, and education for artists and advocates in how to be effective politically were addressed in Access/Advocacy. In addition to more arts education opportunities in and out of school, and development opportunities for professional and aspiring artists with disabilities, participants expressed a need for many kinds of information and training. There were several comments concerning how arts are unsupported as careers in general society, and that the lack of support starts in school. The belief is that school counselors do not consider an arts career as a positive goal for students in general. One presenter guessed that the lack of arts education was the root cause of the dearth of professional artists with disabilities.

What is needed:

- Arts education opportunities both in and out of school (example: theatres cooperating in providing backstage tours; internships and volunteer opportunities; and open house opportunities for students) and at all levels of education.
- Greater knowledge among students of the variety of arts careers – arts administration, backstage and production support, etc.
- Funding for educational and professional development
- Cultural facilities staff training in customer service focusing on audiences and artists with disabilities.
- Access training for administrators of cultural organizations and facilities.
- Arts education and arts therapy opportunities in hospitals, rehabilitation facilities and nursing homes.
- A continuum of exhibition and performance opportunities, from amateur to professional for both audiences and artists.
- Parents' advocacy of inclusion of the arts in their child's IEPs.
- Teacher and school administrator understanding the importance and effectiveness of the arts in improving the academic performance of students with disabilities.
- Disability awareness programs and training in schools including programs that actively team students with and without disabilities.



- Programs where students, aspiring artists and administrators with disabilities are mentored by professionals in their field.
- Greater knowledge and availability of adaptive tools.
- Greater education regarding the many media and disciplines in the arts.
- Inclusion of people with disabilities in all kinds of arts education opportunities available to other members of the general public: introductory, hands-on, audience and critical opportunities.
- Understanding of the contributions of people with all types of disabilities within both the disability and larger community.
- Information for artists, service providers and caregivers on what is needed to support effectively support artistic careers.
- A communication network of supporters of arts education for people with disabilities.

Funding, Resources and Community Resources



Summary: Discussions about resources of all kinds, both those that were and those that were not available, turned out to be hot topics. Much discussion was taken up with creating lists of actual and possible funders, partnering organizations and support organizations, demonstrating a need for a comprehensive source of information on this topic. While the lack of funding itself was a common concern, there was considerable discussion of resources of other kinds.

What is needed:

- Funding and other resources to improve access to work, educational and professional development opportunities for artists with disabilities, including the transportation of individuals with disabilities to and from art events
- A granting avenue for individuals, projects and organizations that focuses on artists with disabilities.
- Support from artists with disabilities for organizations that support them.
- Cooperation among individuals and groups to make best use of scarce resources.
- Centralized information on funding opportunities, grant writing, and other resources for artists with disabilities and a greater awareness of existing sources of this type of information.

Inclusion, Integration and Participation

Summary: While people with disabilities have in recent years been winning their struggle against overt discrimination and segregation, there has not been equal progress toward their inclusion and/or integration into society. Physical and attitudinal barriers remain that prevent their full participation in the arts.

What is needed:

- Barrier-free access to and physical assistance at work sites for artists with mobility impairments.
- Assistants and assistance for artists with disabilities who need them to produce their art work.
- Better integration of services for people with disabilities to improve opportunities for careers in the arts.
- Increased attendance at arts events on the part of audience members with disabilities.
- Inclusive arts events/opportunities including festivals/fairs, art walks, art classes, etc.
- Disability awareness programs at the community level, including programs that encourage inclusion and integration through the arts.
- Disability cultural resource fairs

Information and Marketing

Summary: For many of the attendees, the whole subject of careers in the arts for people with disabilities was fraught with questions. The need for information, the handling of it, the connecting to it, and the dissemination of it, was a consistent thematic strand in the forums. The topic of marketing arts and arts opportunities created by or for artists with disabilities seemed to go hand in hand with the more general need for information on many subjects.

What is needed:

- Newspapers and other media to provide information about disabilities, and arts opportunities created by, for, and with people with disabilities to the general public.
- Information for artists and their service providers and/or caregivers on what is needed to support their careers and market their work.

- Information on insurance for non-profits that enables and emphasizes inclusion.
- Survey of musicians and other artists to find out which clubs, employers and galleries are doing the right thing so that they can be acknowledged, patronized and rewarded.
- A web site that would report unsafe or inaccessible work places for musicians and other artists.
- Access surveys of worksites for artists.
- A distribution network for arts information of special interest to artists with disabilities, for those working with such artists, to communities of people with disabilities and organizations and agencies serving people with disabilities (examples- pre-vocational, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and rehabilitation facilities) that includes e-mail, newspaper, radio, TV, the internet, and any other appropriate means of communication.
- Information about how to start a non-profit.
- Compilation and interpretation of “self-describing statistics on all applications and evaluations” for public funding.
- More use of universal access symbols to advertise accessibility of arts events/facilities.
- Compilations of resources helpful for artists with disabilities (several such lists were begun by Forums participants and are available at the WSAC website www.arts.wa.gov), including:
 - ♦Directory of artists with disabilities
 - ♦Roster of touring artists with disabilities
 - ♦Places to advertise arts events (newspapers, media outlets)
 - ♦Lists of
 - ♦Organizations who can provide information
 - ♦Potential funders
 - ♦Helpful web sites with links to them
 - ♦Agents
 - ♦Photographers
 - ♦Sources of scholarships



Infrastructure, Transportation and Adaptive Technology

Summary: Inequities in access to arts opportunities of all kinds remain part of our state's infrastructure (public amenities, educational system, transportation, existing arts and cultural facilities, etc.) due either to insufficient resources, a lack of accommodations or the foresight to provide them, or inadequate monitoring of compliance to existing laws. Of these, transportation remains one of the most basic issues. If facilities or events are not planned with the transportation needs of people with disabilities in mind or if accessible public transportation is not available, many people with mobility impairments are excluded. The desire for greater use and availability of technological innovations that make the arts more accessible for people with disabilities (adaptive technology) was brought up in several discussions.

What is needed:

- Access surveys of stages/backstage areas in performance venues.
- Access improvements in backstage areas of performing arts venues.
- A support group for artists with disabilities.
- A guild for artists with disabilities.
- Increased use of accessible technologies for performance facilities.
- Support systems for artists with disabilities at the local and state level.
- Increased use of universal access symbols.
- Increased government support, accommodations and technical assistance for people with hidden disabilities.
- More incentives for employers to hire people with disabilities.
- Support for careers in the arts for people with disabilities by state and local agencies serving them and funding for collaborations between agencies providing services for artists with disabilities.
- A method for determining the credibility and extent of an artists claim that they are deriving or can derive livelihood from their art (for purposes of determining other benefits.)
- An integrated system of support that brings together agencies on a local and/or state level.
- Cooperation of state and local arts agencies with VSAAW, WCCD, and other disability organizations and agencies to support careers in the arts for people with disabilities.

- An arts conference about access.
- Monitoring of compliance with existing access laws and contracts (NEA).
- Identification, training and support of leaders in the arts who are people with disabilities to become arts administrators or participate in community and organizational governing structures (non-profit board members, city councils and advisory groups).
- Improvement of transportation for people with disabilities to attend or participate as artists in arts events.
- Programs to address problems of isolation and depression.
- Additional art-making facilities for artists with disabilities (example, a theatre with a visual arts gallery in Spokane).
- New funding mechanisms for supporting artists with disabilities.
- Accommodations for artists with disabilities to take part in juried art exhibits, grant application processes, etc.

Legal Issues

Summary: This topic area did not receive a great deal of discussion, but it is important enough to include the few concerns that were brought up in these discussions.



What is needed:

- Clearer information about liability issues for club owners/arts venue managers. The lack of this information was mentioned as a barrier to greater employment of artists with disabilities.
- Enforcement of existing laws (ADA and related Washington state laws against discrimination on the basis of disability).
- Non-discrimination policy spelled out uniformly and visibly on all applications, contracts and evaluations for arts funding.

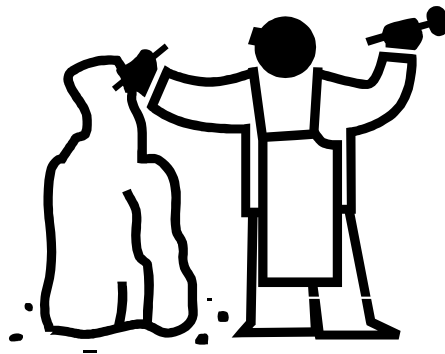
Networking, Collaboration and Partnerships

Summary: Individuals and organizations worked together to address issues involving careers in the arts for people with disabilities. The lack of coordination among agencies that work in the arts and disabilities was addressed by many suggestions for projects/partnerships that would combine the efforts of various organizations (example, VSAAW and WSAC). Networking and alliances among various groups, including artists with and without disabilities were also frequently mentioned. *“...Networking/ collaborating/creating partnerships seem to be the key to much of the direction we all felt is needed to move our culture forward into a more inclusive and welcoming environment.”*

What is needed:

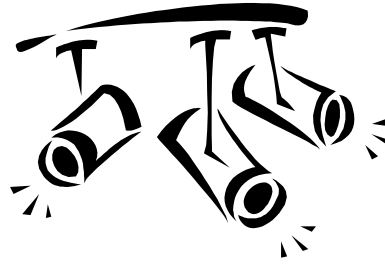
- Collaboration among artists, artist membership organizations, artist support organizations and the general public (example; the musicians unions) to identify and reward employers that provide access and employment for artists with disabilities.
- Partnerships between arts organizations and schools.
- Collaboration among artists with disabilities to leverage their impact with presenters (galleries, performing arts venues).
- Collaboration between schools and arts presenters to provide internships, and volunteer opportunities for students with disabilities.
- Partnerships between VSAAW and/or other disabilities/arts service organizations to provide training for arts administrators and front-office staff; to encourage better access on the part of grantees; to provide an up-to-date list of artists with disabilities; and to increase Board membership of people with disabilities and increase participation of people with disabilities as arts administrators.
- Network among arts and disability service providers, arts organizations, colleges, schools, community centers, and others to create a multi-format “web” of information and communication resources.
- An “innovative pooling of resources to create new ways to put moneys/ resources together” to support artists with disabilities.
- Support and acknowledgment of arts skills used/artists employed in “areas like tourism, libraries, service organizations, etc.”
- A guild/support group for artists with disabilities.

- Links between state agencies serving people with disabilities (arts, education, vocational, human services, etc.) to support the arts as a viable economic option.
- Emulation of successful models of systems/integration/cooperation such as those that have been created in Kent, WA and in the state of California.
- Artists in general need to become more involved in the organizations that affect them, including boards, panels, advisory committees, etc.
- Collaboration between arts agencies, organizations, programs and departments with a specific arts focus to increase arts opportunities for people with disabilities (example - using visual art students to make sets for theatre performances).
- A network of support for arts education for people with disabilities.
- Collaborations, partnerships, networking and links among organizations, agencies and individuals to provide comprehensive information regarding access to the arts in general, careers in the arts for people with disabilities, and related information on the internet.



What can you do?

Some starting places....



- 1) Go to the WSAC website and join the conversation at www.arts.wa.gov
- 2) Add issues of access to your discussion of *EVERY* program and project you promote or present.
- 3) Educate yourself and your board with training about the ADA and access. (See resources)
- 4) Provide potential board members and volunteers with advance training that is inclusive of people with disabilities.
- 5) Make sure your vision, mission, goals and bylaws have inclusive language.
- 6) Check all your communications to make them as accessible as possible.
- 7) Revamp your website so that it is “Bobby” approved. (See resources)
- 8) Invite the VSA arts of Washington site survey team to assess your facility and programs.
- 9) Become a “groupie” for one artist with a disability: buy their work, attend their performances, promote their work to your friends.
- 10) Check out the website of the International Guild of Disabled Artists and Performers at www.igodap.org

For further information

“Bobby-Approved ” a free tool for testing the accessibility of your website at www.cast.org/bobby

Coalition of Responsible Disabled
908 N. Howard Ste. 10
Spokane, WA 99201
Phone/TTY: (509) 326-6355
Fax: (509) 327-2420
Email: elecord@triax.com

Design for Accessibility, A Cultural Administrator’s Handbook, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) www.nasaa-arts.org

The DRM Regional Resources Directory – Washington
Internet: <http://www.disabilityresources.org/WASHINGTON.html>

Eastern Assistive Technology Resource Center
West 606 Sharp
Spokane, WA 99201
Phone/TTY: (509) 328-9350
Fax: (509) 326-2261
Email: Spokane@seals.org
Internet: <http://wata.org/wata/eatrc/index.htm>
Description: The Eastern Washington Assistive Technology Resource Center is a collaboration of the Washington Assistive Technology Alliance and the Easter Seal Society of Washington. Its goals are to increase the awareness, availability and accessibility of Assistive Technology (AT) in Eastern Washington to benefit persons with disabilities

Tacoma Area Coalition of Individuals with Disabilities
6315 South 19th Street
Tacoma, WA 98466-6217
Phone: (253) 565-9000
TTY: (253) 565-5445
Fax: (253) 565-5578
Internet: <http://www.tacid.org>

VSA arts of Washington
305 Harrison, Suite 303
Seattle WA 98109
Dan Schmitt, Executive Director
Phone: (206) 443-1843
TTY: (206) 443-1843
Fax: (206) 448-9585
wa@vsarts.org



Description: *VSA arts of Washington* (VSAAW) is dedicated to providing arts opportunities by, for, and with persons with disabilities throughout the state of Washington. The Seattle Center Artists' Studio recently moved to the main floor of Seattle Center's House, a major gathering place for both tourists and locals. The Studio provides an optimum setting for community inclusion by providing a free adaptive art-making facility in a very visible public location that is open to all.

Washington Assistive Technology Alliance
ATRC/University of Washington
P.O. Box 357920
Seattle, WA 98195-7920
Phone: (206) 685-4181
TTY: (206) 616-1396
Fax: (206) 543-4779
Email: uwctds@u.washington.edu
Internet: <http://wata.org>

Description: The Washington Assistive Technology Alliance (WATA) is a consumer advocacy network. WATA activities include: information and referral, consultation, and training related to selection of AT devices, services and funding, legal advice and advocacy, policy development; and legislative action, technical consultation and training, publications.

Washington Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities
4649 Sunnyside North, Suite 100
Seattle, WA 98103
Phone: (206) 545-7055
TTY: (206) 632-3456
Fax: (206) 545-7059
Email: info@wccd.org
Internet: <http://www.wccd.org>

Washington NICHCY Resource Sheet
Internet: <http://www.nichcy.org/stateshe/wa.htm>

Washington State Accessibility Codes

Phone: (206) 281-5700

Internet: <http://www.access-board.gov/links/statecodes.htm#WASHINGTON>

Description: This is from a national directory created by the Access Board of state contacts for codes and regulations related to accessibility.

Washington State Arts Commission

Washington State 504/ADA Coordinator

Bitsy Bidwell, Community Arts Development Manager

PO Box 42675

Olympia, WA 98504-2675

Phone: (360) 586-2421

TTY: (800) 833-6388

Fax: (360) 586-5351

Email: bitsyb@arts.wa.gov

Internet: <http://www.arts.wa.gov>

Description: The role of the ADA/504 coordinator is to support access efforts through education of constituents on ADA 504 compliance, explaining the Art Commission's policies, and assisting grantees in performing ADA evaluations.



The items on this list are taken from the "Washington State Agencies and Organizations for ADA Compliance and Technical Assistance" listing published by the National Arts and Disability Center at the University of California Los Angeles at www.nadc.uda.edu.

Many people assisted with information, resources and enthusiasm, among these were: the entire staffs at VSA arts of Washington, the Washington State Arts Commission, and disAbility Resources of Southwest Washington; the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment; the Seattle Center; the Spokane Arts Commission; the Vancouver Arts Commission; the Water Resources Education Center of Vancouver; Peg Holman and the Open Space Community.